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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Culture of peace

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

International drug control

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 10 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you that an international conference to mark the fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, entitled "Lessons of the inter-Tajik settlement for Afghanistan", was held in Dushanbe, from 17 to 19 June 2002 with the assistance of the United Nations University for Peace.

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The participants in the work of the conference included the deputy ministers for foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, the Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, representatives of the United Nations Secretariat and the European Union, diplomats and academics, and representatives of public and non-governmental organizations from the Central Asian States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, the United States of America, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland and a number of other countries.

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, addressed the conference.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes distributed as a document of the General Assembly under items 21 (b), 24, 37, 79, 88, 103, 106 and 163 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Rashid **Alimov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 10 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov at the international conference "Lessons of the inter-Tajik settlement for Afghanistan", held to mark the fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 17-19 June 2002

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the ancient Tajik land and to express appreciation to all those involved in organizing this important forum. I think that your conference, timed to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the establishment of peace and stability in Tajikistan, will concern itself not only with considering the outcome of the peace process in our country, but also with expressing innovative ideas and opinions that may be used in Afghanistan and in other conflict-racked parts of the globe.

Now, as I have already noted, the people of our country are preparing to celebrate one of the most significant holidays of independent Tajikistan — the fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, which took place on 27 June 1997.

This document marked the cessation of the civil confrontation in the country and its transition to a peaceful course of development.

Having glanced over the last few years, I will venture to draw one, in my view, very important conclusion — no matter how complicated our path to peace was, the main motive forces in our struggle, a struggle waged by those whom fate had entrusted with returning peace to our land, were, nevertheless, a sincere yearning for peace and a readiness to give up political and personal interests for the sake of the tranquillity and unity of the Motherland. These qualities, characteristic of the Tajik people, which history has made wise with experience, were especially evident in those difficult and tragic times.

Analysing the causes and conditions that led to the civil conflict in Tajikistan is a task for historians, political and military scholars and other researchers.

For my part, as a politician called on by fate, by historical circumstance and by my people to stand at the head of independent Tajikistan at the very height of the confrontation, when each day of war pushed the sides further apart, I did not envision for myself a more exalted task than restoring peace and harmony in my native land and, for that, I was prepared to give everything.

I set out our main task and the basic principles of State policy in my very first address to the people of Tajikistan, in November 1992, at the sixteenth session of the Supreme Council of the Republic, when the very fate of the Tajik nation and Tajik statehood hung in the balance.

It was precisely then that the belligerent parties, heeding our call to recognize the need to put national interests ahead of the interests of parties, movements and any other separate groups of people, first sat down at the negotiating table. The sixteenth session of the Supreme Council in Khujand, historic for our people, must

therefore be considered a moment of reckoning in the Tajik peace process, which subsequently resumed in 1993.

Today, we can say with confidence: no matter how difficult it was, we have succeeded in putting into practice almost everything that was conceived.

The most outstanding achievement of recent times is the fact that we were able to preserve the unity of the Tajik nation and the territorial integrity of Tajikistan, to end the civil war with the active assistance of the international community and to restore concord and justice in the country.

I thank fate and all those who helped us to achieve this truly great aim. On this day, I cannot but recall those who gave their lives for the sake of peace in our land. The selfless champions of peace included not only Tajiks, but also representatives of other countries, who felt my people's pain as if it were their own.

May their memory live forever!

Regarding the individual aspects of the peace process in Tajikistan, I wish to point out that its success was linked, in great part, to the presence of a whole range of factors. Among these, mention must be made, first of all, of the processes taking place worldwide which unite humanity in the face of various challenges and threats and a real appreciation of the danger posed by local conflicts capable of affecting the security and stability not only of individual regions, but also of the entire world.

These factors, combined with the sincere aspiration of many countries and international organizations to facilitate the peaceful settlement of the conflict, made it significantly easier to achieve peace in Tajikistan.

The sense that our people did not remain alone in its troubles — quite the contrary — and the help and support that we constantly felt from countries sometimes far removed from us geographically helped the Tajik sides to advance step by step to meet one another.

The establishment of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), comprising military contingents from the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the active mediation efforts of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the International Committee of the Red Cross and humanitarian assistance from many countries and international non-governmental organizations played a very important role in the settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict.

The presence of such mechanisms of assistance and support to the negotiating process as the group of observer countries and, subsequently, the Contact Group of Guarantor Countries contributed to the steadiness of the negotiating process between the parties to the conflict and encouraged them to implement fully the agreements reached.

One factor of no small account that also influenced the peace process in Tajikistan was the granting to Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan of the opportunity to hold in their territories rounds of negotiations and consultations between the Tajik sides, who, owing to various circumstances, had ruled out the possibility of holding such talks and negotiations in the Motherland.

Important contributions to this noble cause were made by the special envoys of the United Nations Secretary-General and the heads of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan, including the late Ismat Kittani and the late Ramiro Píriz-Ballón, Gerd Dietrich Merrem, Ján Kubis and Ibo Petrov, who are here today, Liviu Bota, Darko Silovic and dozens of other friends of Tajikistan.

Taking advantage of this opportunity and of the presence here of representatives from many countries and international organizations, I wish to express, on behalf of the people of Tajikistan words of heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation, to those States and international organizations, and all those individuals who contributed to the cause of peace and national harmony in our country.

In our opinion, the peace process in Tajikistan is instructive not only for us. It has been emphasized more than once at various international forums, including forums held within the framework of the United Nations, and by many authoritative scholars that the experience of achieving peace and national harmony in our country can serve as a model for use in other parts of the planet, for both the parties to the conflict and the mediators and peacekeeping forces.

Now, five years after the negotiating process and the subsequent phase of post-conflict reconstruction, many regard the experience of achieving peace in Tajikistan as unique, both in terms of the ability of the sides to find points of contact on the most complex issues and their determination to put the agreements reached into practice, and as regards the success of the United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Taking into account not only the common linguistic, historical and cultural factors, but also the similarity of many aspects of the current situation in Afghanistan to what we were experiencing a few years ago, the chances of this experience being useful to our southern neighbour are many times greater.

Here, I should like to emphasize, first of all, that the chief and decisive factor in the peace process was the desire and consistency of the Tajik sides themselves. Without that factor, in my view, no conflict can be resolved.

Regarding the role of the United Nations, we believe that in the inter-Tajik conflict, the Organization acquired new skills distinct from those used in the classic peacekeeping operations conducted by it. This has to do, first and foremost, with the efficient coordination by the United Nations of the efforts of individual countries and the use of the capacities of regional and other international structures in individual aspects of the operation.

While the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS countries, for example, as one of the stabilizing factors in the peace process throughout its duration, did not have such a mandate from the United Nations, the exemplary coordination and cooperation between these two components of the process — the universal security system and its regional partner — was, nevertheless, always emphasized by the Security Council and enjoyed its effective support.

The experience of the coordination between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the OSCE Mission in Tajikistan, when, following the completion of the main phase of the campaign for the repatriation of Tajik refugees from Afghanistan and the CIS countries, the mandate of UNHCR to monitor the observance of the rights of returnees was transferred to

OSCE, is regarded as unique and without parallel, and this clear and distinctive "division of labour" contributed to a great extent to the effectiveness of the activities of both organizations in Tajikistan and, most important, to the painless return of yesterday's refugees to a normal life.

Many examples can be found, in the course of the peace process in our country, of instances in which different organizations combined and coordinated their efforts in the name of one goal — the achievement of peace and tranquillity.

It should also be noted that the coming of peace facilitated the more active and effective conduct of reforms.

Within the framework of the implementation of the agreements between the sides, we were able, in a short space of time, to establish a standing professional parliament, whereas, in different conditions, this would have taken years of discussion and debate as to its advisability.

Many political parties participated in the parliamentary elections, including parties that were prohibited during the period of confrontation, and some of them successfully overcame all the ups and downs of the political campaign and today are represented in the highest legislative body.

We are creating real possibilities for the free functioning of the mass media and of public organizations and regard them as essential institutions of civil society.

Now, our people look to the future with optimism and confidence, for the lessons of the civil confrontation not only will not allow a repetition of those events, but also provide guarantees of further peaceful and constructive labour.

Owing to the development of current trends in international politics, Tajikistan has found itself at a geopolitical crossroads of the changes taking place in the world.

This places a great responsibility on us. I should like to dwell on just two aspects of this important international mission, in the context of the theme of today's conference.

First, we serve as an example for the fraternal people of Afghanistan. Many Afghan politicians, and ordinary citizens, too, cite the "Tajik experience" as a positive example of peace-building and hope that they will, like us, be able to restore peace.

Second, with the intensification of our role in the efforts to combat international terrorism, Tajikistan has turned into a country whose opinions are heeded by many leaders of the international community.

In these new historical conditions, we are also counting on the fact that the attention to and interest in our country, and indeed the Central Asian region as a whole, will not diminish, since the potential causes of conflict have not yet been eliminated.

Given their economic and social problems, foremost among them poverty, our societies remain vulnerable in the face of the potential proliferation of various terrorist, extremist and separatist ideas.

It seems that peace and stability in our region run counter to the plans of the destructive forces that periodically stir up the situation in different parts of Central Asia.

In these conditions, the efforts of international organizations and of the international community as a whole must, we believe, be focused on specific areas.

First, this entails support for measures aimed at consolidating society in our countries, with broad use of the tools and possibilities of preventive diplomacy.

Second, massive international assistance must be provided to deal with the urgent problems confronting our countries at the current stage of their development. Otherwise, our region may be turned into a permanent zone of instability.

It is not necessary to search far for examples — the events in neighbouring Afghanistan are a clear illustration of this. The appearance of the reactionary Taliban movement in Afghanistan's political arena and the transformation of that country into a lair for terrorists of various stripes and a haven for the drug trade were not accidents.

This was, to a great extent, predetermined by the destruction of the economy and the social sphere in that country, when people could not find a normal way of life other than joining armed terrorist factions or going to work for the drug mafia, and for those who did not take those paths, nothing remained but to leave their country.

We are convinced that the encouragement of the parties to the Afghan conflict to abide by the Bonn Agreement and the establishment of a broadly representative Government, reflecting the interests of all ethnic groups of Afghan society, are the means on the basis of which peace and prosperity in Afghanistan can be guaranteed; that has been shown in the current phase by the outcome of the recently concluded Loya Jirga.

In our view, the process of transition to peace in Afghanistan will be successful only if active assistance is provided in the interests of its economic development.

The scope for the application of the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations and of individual countries is broader in this area than in respect of the political process and it is no less important.

One cannot but mention the fact that, in the south of our continent, two large countries, countries moreover with nuclear weapons in their arsenals, were on the brink of war. We must not on any account allow the tension between India and Pakistan to escalate.

The sides must be encouraged, using every means — and the international community has a good many of them — to take decisive steps to reduce the degree of risk of the outbreak of war, to initiate a process of negotiation and to eliminate the backsliding of the past.

It is gratifying that, thanks to the active efforts of many countries, the relations between the two States have improved markedly of late, and we must support this trend.

Thus, when analysing the situation in each potentially explosive country or region, it is vital to identify the causes and conditions that may lead to conflict, to react rapidly and to cooperate with the authorities with a view to eliminating these causes and conditions. In other words, emphasis must be placed on preventive measures.

In this connection, I wish to lay particular stress on the fact that one of the main sources of international terrorism, extremism and organized crime, which today constitute a serious threat to peace and tranquillity throughout the planet, is the low standard of living and the poverty and destitution in a number of the world's countries and regions.

It will be difficult to talk about maintaining peace and stability at all, until such time as the developed States understand the full extent of the danger posed by such a gap and strive to rectify the situation.

It must be said, in the interests of fairness, that we have seen such attempts quite often at the international level, including in the form of assistance provided to Tajikistan, but as a rule these decisions are taken for effect, and they frequently remain on paper.

Another important element to which I wish to draw your attention is the demographic situation, which has assumed menacing parameters in a number of the world's countries. If this problem is not solved in time, then, in the very near future, humanity will find itself confronting new threats associated with unemployment, hunger and disease.

In conditions in which the outbreak of conflict is unavoidable, the international community must do everything it can to reduce the area of the conflict and its consequences, at the same time as focusing its efforts on and encouraging the sides to seek mutually acceptable ways of dealing with the points at issue.

To sum up, I wish to observe that the experience of achieving peace in Tajikistan is appealing as regards the creation of new means and mechanisms and of qualitatively new interrelations between the various separate institutions established during the peacemaking process, and the assignment to them of new functions and capacities.

I believe that here, during the work of the forum, you will identify other elements, the application of which in similar situations may not be without success.

I can see many familiar faces here today — not only scholars known for their work on our country, including on the recent difficult stage in its history, but also those who, through their energy, industry and intellect, brought this day closer for us.

27 June will undoubtedly remain in our historical memory as a lesson serving to remind us of the tragedy we went through and of the need always to cherish peace and accord and to consolidate national unity and the country's independence. Today's forum strengthens us still further in our conviction that we will always follow this tried and tested path.

Allow me to wish all the participants in this forum personal happiness and success in your arduous and noble mission, which is undoubtedly contributing to the realization of the most urgent goal for humanity today — the safeguarding of peace and stability throughout the planet.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to express particular appreciation to a United Nations structure with a very symbolic name — the United Nations University for Peace, which was among the initiators and chief organizers of this forum.